



AHL-E ḤAQQ

AHL-E ḤAQQ “People of (the absolute) Truth,” a sect found in western Persia and some regions of northeastern Iraq; the name has also been adopted by other Islamic sects (Noṣayrīs, Ḥorūfīs) and appears to be rooted in the tradition of the extremist Shi‘ites (*ḡolāt*). ‘Alī-Elāhī or ‘Alī-Allāhī “adherents to the divinity of ‘Alī,” a name applied to the Ahl-e Ḥaqq by outsiders in their neighborhood, points to the same origin, but misleadingly, since the “deified” ‘Alī plays only a minor role in their system.

The heartlands of the Ahl-e Ḥaqq are Lorestān and, to the north of it, the regions of the Gūrānī-speaking population around Kermānšāh. The two main sanctuaries of the sect, the tomb of Bābā Yādgār in Dohāb and that of Solṭān Ṣohāk in Perdīvar, are located in Gūrānī territory. There are also Ahl-e Ḥaqq in the adjacent regions of Iraqi Kurdistan, around Kerkūk and Solaymāniya. Toward the north, they are dispersed in Iranian Azarbaijan around Lake Ormīa and as far as Mākū. Farther east, they are found in the mountains north of Tehran and on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea. There are also communities of Ahl-e Ḥaqq in most major cities in Iran.

The religious literature of the Ahl-e Ḥaqq is mostly written in Gūrānī. There is no sacred scripture of canonical rank. However, the *Daftar-e kezāna-ye Perdīvarī* (“Book of the Treasure of Perdīvar”), a collection of twenty-six mythological poems (*kalāms*), is highly esteemed in Gūrānī territory (several of them have been edited with commentary by M. Mokri; see bibliog.). The semi-mythical history of the Ahl-e Ḥaqq is the subject of the *Ketāb-e saranjām* (“Book of perfection”). The communities in Azarbaijan have some *kalāms* in



Ādarī Turkish. The religious renovator Ḥājj Ne‘matallāh (d. 1920) composed his chief works in Persian, probably for the sake of a wider circulation: the didactic poem *Šāh-nāma-ye ḥaqīqat*, in 11,116 distiches, containing a summary of Ahl-e Ḥaqq doctrine (edited by M. Mokri), and the *Forqān al-akbār* (“Revelation of tidings”), a prose work (analyzed by V. Minorsky in *EI*² I, pp. 261b-62a). Ḥājj Ne‘matallāh also wrote poems in Kurdish.

The belief of the Ahl-e Ḥaqq in seven successive incarnations of the godhead appears to preserve an old heritage of extremist Shi‘ite origin; a number of their concepts have parallels in other sects of this type (e.g., the appearance of God in a pearl, an idea which is also found among the Syrian Noṣayrīs). The oldest stratum of the doctrine of the Ahl-e Ḥaqq goes back to influences from the lowlands of the lower Tigris and the Kārūn. These regions were, during the Middle Ages and until the late 10th/16th century, centers of Noṣayrī *ḡolūw* (see W. Caskel, “Ein Mahdi des 15. Jahrhunderts,” *Islamica* 4, 1931, pp. 88-91).

The first four divine incarnations are the Creator Kāvandagār, Mortazā ‘Alī (i.e., ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭāleb), Shah Kvošīn, and Solṭān Ṣohāk; the subsects disagree about the other three. The legends concerning Shah Kvošīn take place in Lorestān and seem to represent the earliest phase of the development of the doctrine in the highlands, but the religion received its definitive form in Gūrānī territory in connection with the historical person Solṭān Ṣohāk (8th/14th or 9th/15th century), who is buried in Perdīvar and revered as an incarnation of God by all the subsects. Each incarnation is accompanied by a retinue of four Helper Angels (*yārān-e čār malak*) and a female figure. The names of these angels in the first two cycles are derived from Islamic teachings and extremist Shi‘ite tradition: Jebrā’īl, Mīkā’īl, Esrāfil, and ‘Azrā’īl in the time of the Creator; Salmān, Qanbar, Moḥammad, and Noṣayr (Ebn Noṣayr?), as well as Fāṭema as a female angel, in the time of ‘Alī. In contrast the first three caliphs, Mo‘āwīa, and ‘Ā’eša appear as followers of the devil. Among the angels of the cycle of Shah Kvošīn is found the Sufi poet and local saint of Hamadān, Bābā Ṭāher (5th/11th century); among those of Solṭān Ṣohāk are Benyāmīn, Dāwūd, and Mūsī (Moses).

Another feature also found in extremist Shi‘ite groups is the belief in metempsychosis; it is as a “changing of (corporeal) garments” whose aim is the purification of the soul through 1,001 rebirths. Salvation is restricted, however, to the people created of yellow clay (*zarda-gel*), i.e., the Ahl-e Ḥaqq; those created of black earth (*kāk-e sīāh*) are eternally damned. The seven cycles will be consummated by the appearance of an eschatological savior, the



Mahdī or Lord of the Time (*ṣāḥeb-e zamān*) and the Last Judgment will take place in the plains of Šahrazūr or Solṭānīya.

In the Gūrānī texts the extremist Shiʿite framework is filled with mythological and legendary stories, most of which are related to specific rituals and customs and seem to contain remnants of the autochthonous pagan Gūrānī mythology. Dāwūd, the horseman of the gray courser, the rider of the winds, bears the features of the weather god. According to a story which is related in several literary versions, he comes to the aid of a ship in distress, on which the angel Benyāmīn is present in the guise of a dervish, and curbs the waves. The rescued seafarers accept the true religion (see M. Mokri, *La grande assemblée*; idem, “Le Kalam gourani sur le Cavalier au coursier gris”). Occasionally Dāwūd is transformed into water, seeping into the ground and coming forth again by God’s command. The bloody and bloodless sacrifices of the Ahl-e Ḥaqq are called *sabz namūdan* “to make green” and are probably remnants of fertility myths and cults. The story of the dervish on the ship in distress is an old Sufi motif (see Mokri, *La grande assemblée*, pp. 60ff.). The first four cycles of divine incarnation from the Creator Kāvandagār to Solṭān Šohāk are described in Sufi terms as the phases of *šarīʿa*, *ṭarīqa*, *maʿrefa*, and *ḥaqīqa*; only the last has brought the revelation of absolute truth (*ḥaqq*).

Split up into numerous ethnic, tribal and religious groups, the Ahl-e Ḥaqq lack a unified, central organization, just as they lack a canonical scripture. However, the institutions and rites founded by Solṭān Šohāk are universally recognized. Among these is the important ceremony of *sar-sepordan*, the “entrustment of the head” (again a Sufi term), an initiation rite in which the neophyte (*ṭāleb*) links himself to a spiritual master (*pīr*). As an external sign, a nutmeg is broken on the neophyte’s head. The relationship between master and disciple, a typical dervish institution, has its prototype in the story of the angel Benyāmīn, the *pīr* of the *pīrs*, and is interpreted as a renewal of the original covenant between God and his creation. The same meaning is attributed to the spiritual brotherhood established between a man (or several men) and a woman and called *šarṭ-e eqrār* “covenant of acknowledgement”; known among the Yazīdīs in a similar form, it entails the taboo of incest. Besides the previously mentioned bloody and bloodless sacrifices (*qorbānī-e kūndār va bī-kūn*), *dekr* sessions, also derived from dervish practice, play a major role in the life of the communities. During the sessions, burning coals are occasionally handled or taken into the mouth (see M. F. Stead, “The Ali-Ilahi Sect in Persia,” *The Moslem World* 1932, p. 186).



For a music sample, see [Tarz-e Yari](#).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

V. Minorsky, “Notes sur la secte des Ahlé-Haqq,” *Revue du monde musulman* 40, 1920, pp. 20-97; 45, 1921, pp. 205-302.

Idem, “Ahl-i Ḥaqq,” *EI*² I, pp. 260-63 (with full bibliography).

Idem, “Sultān Ishāq,” *EI*¹ III, p. 546.

M. Mokri, “Le "Secret indicible" et la "Pierre noire" en Perse dans la tradition des Kurdes et des Lurs, Fidèles de Vérité (Ahl-e Ḥaqq),” *JA* 250, 1962, pp. 370-433.

Idem, *Le Chasseur de Dieu et le mythe du Roi-Aigle (Dawra-y Dāmyāri)*, Wiesbaden, 1967.

Idem, “Kalām sur l’Aigle divin et le verger de Pirdīvar,” *JA* 255, 1967, pp. 361-74.

Idem, “Un kalam gourani sur les Compagnons du Roi des Rois,” *JA* 257, 1967, pp. 317-59.

Idem, *Cycle des Fidèles Compagnons à l’époque de Buhlūl* (Contribution Scientifique aux Etudes Iraniennes 5, fasc. 4), Paris, 1974.

Idem, “Le Kalam gourani sur le Cavalier au coursier gris, le Dompteur du Vent,” *JA* 262, 1974, pp. 47-93.

Idem, *La Grande Assemblée des Fidèles de Vérité au tribunal sur le mont Zagros en Iran (Dawra-y Dīwāna-Gawra)*, Paris, 1977.

Ḥājj Ne‘matallāh Moḡrem Mokri, *Šah-Nāme-ye Ḥaqīqat, Le Livre des Rois de Vérité: Histoire traditionnelle des Ahl-e Ḥaqq*, ed. M. Mokri, 2 vols., Paris and Tehran, 1966, 1971.

C. J. Edmonds, “The Beliefs and Practices of the Ahl-i Ḥaqq of Iraq,” *Iran* 7,



1969, pp. 89-101.